Vigilantism Is Called Real Threat

WASHINGTON (AP) — A history professor told the Preisdent's violence commission today that he feared that "a new wave of vigilantism is a real prospect today.

"There are disquieting signs that it has already begun," Richard Maxwell Brown, professor of history at the College of William and Mary, said in prepared testimony.

Brown, who said he began his study of American vigilantism 11 years ago, said that the conditions which historically have produced vigilantism were present today.

"There is no question in my mind that we are faced with a breakdown in law and order—one which actually exceeds anything in the past I am aware of," he said.

Brown added that he was not referring primarily to the race riots that began in 1964 but to a problem which antedates them:

Namely, the fact that for two decades or more our great cities have been slowly strangling in the grips of mounting crime. I am referring, also, to the immense proportions of automobile theft which have an impact deep into the rural highways and byways of America. Finally, I am referring to the staggering inroads of organized crime . . . "